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Mahabharata – 30

THE WAR BEGINS

O MONARCH, WHEN KRISHNA REPORTED ON THE FAILURE OF HIS PEACE MISSION AT THE COURT OF HASTINAPURA, YUDHISHTHIRA BEGAN PREPARATIONS FOR WAR.

"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

SO HERE WE ARE, PREPARED FOR BATTLE, WITH EACH OF OUR AKSHAUHINIS* BEING LED BY GREAT HEROES LIKE DRUPADA, VIRATA, DHRISHTADYUMNA, SHIKHANDI, SATYAKI, CHEKITANA, AND BHEEMA. TELL US, OH SAHADEVA, WHO DO YOU CONSIDER TO BE WORTHY OF BEING APPOINTED AS THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF?

* A COMPLETE ARMY CONSISTING OF 21870 ELEPHANTS, 21870 CHARIOTS, 65610 CAVALRY AND 109350 INFANTRY.

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"SAID SAHADEVA*—

IN MY OPINION, VIRATA THE MIGHTY KING OF MATSYA SHOULD BE THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF OF OUR FORCES.

"NAKULA SAID—

DRUPADA SHOULD BE OUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

"ARJUNA SAID —

DHRISHTADYUMNA IS DESTINED TO KILL DRONA. HE IS FULLY CONVERSANT WITH ALL ASPECTS OF WARFARE AND WILL BE ABLE TO WITHSTAND THE ARROWS OF BHEESHMA. HE ALONE IS FIT TO BE OUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

"BHEEMA SAID—

SHIKHANDI IS BORN TO KILL BHEESHMA. HENCE SHIKHANDI SHOULD BE OUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

"YUDHISHTHIRA SAID—

KRISHNA IS ALL-KNOWING. HE IS AWARE OF OUR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES. SO LET HIM NAME OUR COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF.

* IN THE OLDEN DAYS, IT WAS THE PRACTICE TO ASCERTAIN THE VIEWS OF THE YOUNGER PEOPLE BEFORE CONSULTING THE ELDERS

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"KRISHNA SAID —

O KING, I FULLY APPROVE OF THE HEROES YOU HAVE CHOSEN TO LEAD YOUR SEVEN AKSHAUHINIS. AS FOR THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF I THINK THE CHOICE OF DHRISHTA-DYUMNA IS THE RIGHT ONE.

O KING, ONCE KRISHNA HAD NAMED THE COMMANDER-IN-CHIEF, THE TROOPS ENTHUSIASTICALLY BEGAN TO GET READY.

"AS THE PANDAVA ARMY IN MARTIAL ARRAY SET OUT FOR KURUKSHETRA, THE ATMOSPHERE RESOUNDED WITH THE LION-ROAR OF WARRIORS, THE BLOWING OF CONCH SHELLS, THE NEIGHING OF HORSES AND THE TRUMPETING OF ELEPHANTS.

"WHEN THEY REACHED A COOL AND SHADY STRETCH OF FLAT LAND, YUDHISHTHIRA SIGNALLED THE ARMY TO STOP.

WE SHALL CAMP HERE.

"AND SO, THE PANDAVA ARMY PITCHED TENTS AND CAMPED THERE.

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"MEANWHILE, AT HASTINAPURA, DURYODHANA CALLED KARNA, DUHSHASANA AND SHAKUNI AND SAID —

HAVING FAILED IN HIS PEACE MISSION, KRISHNA IS SURE TO INCITE THE PANDAVAS TO FIGHT. THEIR ALLIES, VIRATA AND DRUPADA, ARE OUR OLD ENEMIES. HENCE THIS WAR IS GOING TO BE A VERY FEARSOME ONE.

SO LET US PREPARE FOR WAR IMMEDIATELY. LET OUR ALLIES WITH THEIR ARMIES PROCEED TO KURUKSHETRA AND CAMP THERE.

LET THE ROADS FROM OUR CITY TO THE CAMP BE LEVELLED. LET THE TENTS BE WELL-EQUIPPED WITH ARMS AND WEAPONS AND DECKED WITH STREAMERS AND FLAGS.

"AND SO, DURYODHANA'S FORCES GOT READY AND SET OFF FOR THE BATTLE-FIELD OF KURUKSHETRA.

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amar chitra katha

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* DUTY

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"IN THE KAURAVA CAMP, DURYODHANA DIVIDED HIS ARMY INTO ELEVEN AKSHAUHINIS AND HE PLACED KRIPA, DRONA, SHALYA, JAYADRATHA, SUDAKSHINA, KRITAVARMA, ASHWATTHAMA, KARNA, SHAKUNI AND BAHLIKA* IN CHARGE OF ONE EACH.

"EACH CHARIOT WAS PULLED BY FOUR EXCELLENT HORSES AND WAS EQUIPPED WITH A HUNDRED BOWS. THERE WERE TWO WARRIORS, TWO ATTENDANTS AND ONE CHARIOTEER ON EVERY CHARIOT.

"EACH ELEPHANT WAS DECKED WITH ORNAMENTS AND CARRIED SEVEN WARRIORS AND LOADS OF WEAPONS AND QUIVERS OF ARROWS.

"APART FROM THESE THERE WERE THOUSANDS OF CAVALRYMEN...

"...AND HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS INFANTRYMEN.

* KING OF BAHLIK, THE ANCIENT NAME FOR BALKH

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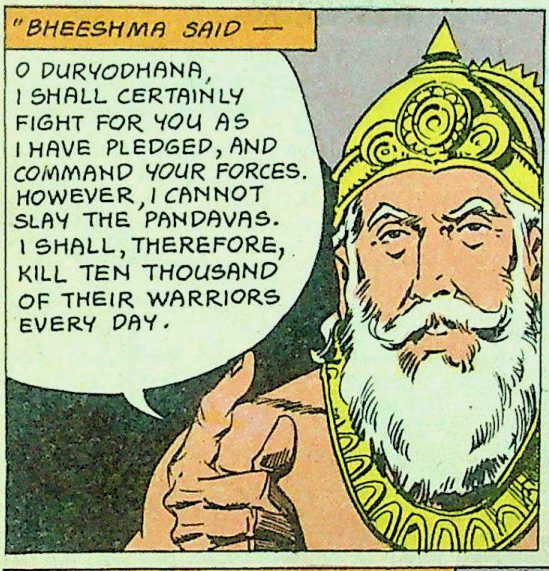

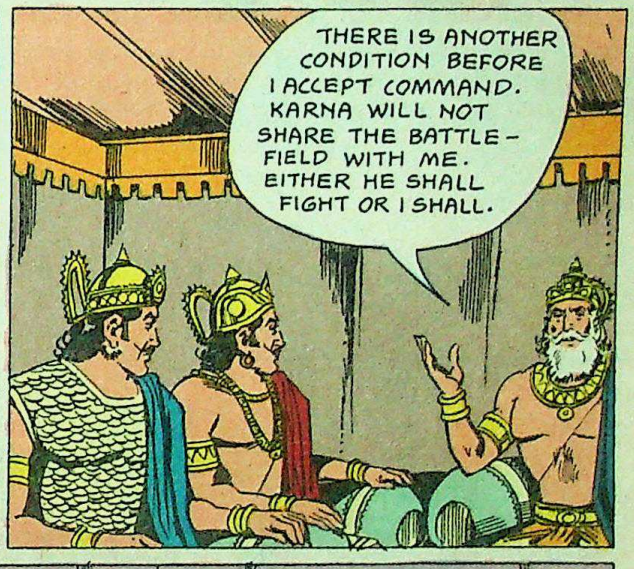

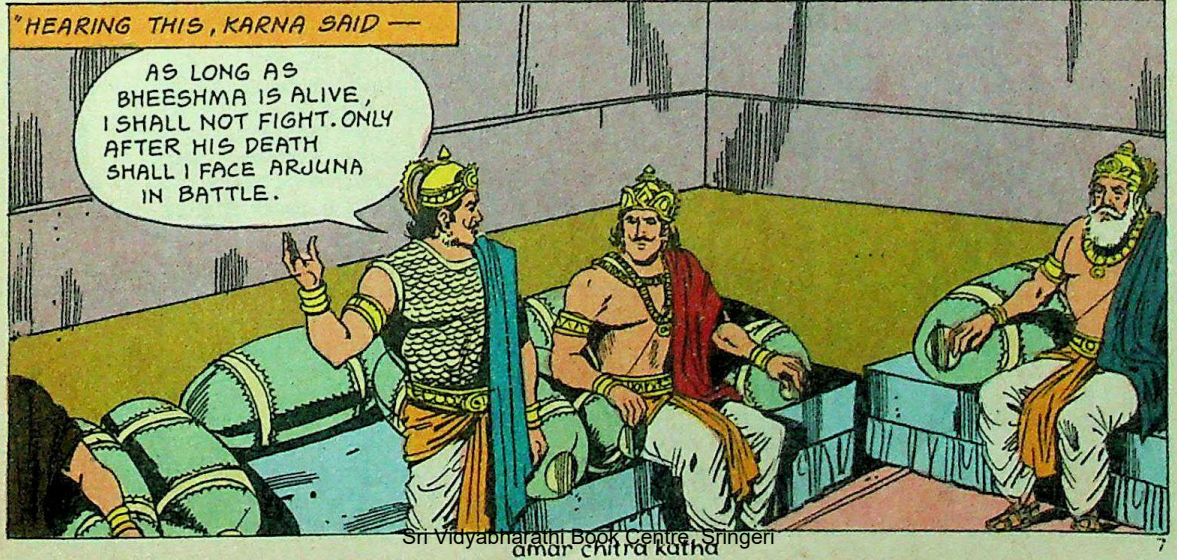

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"WHEN THE NEWS OF BHEESHMA HAVING TAKEN THE COMMAND OF THE KAURAVA ARMY REACHED THE PANDAVA CAMP, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID —

ENSURE THAT THE ARMY IS ALERT AND READY FOR COMBAT. OUR FIRST ENCOUNTER WILL BE WITH OUR GRANDSIRE, BHEESHMA. LET SKILLED WARRIORS LEAD OUR FORCES INTO BATTLE.

"AND SO, THE SEVEN DIVISIONS OF THE PANDAVA ARMY WERE ARRAYED FOR BATTLE UNDER THE COMMAND OF DHRISHTADYUMNA. THE OVERALL COMMAND WAS BESTOWED ON ARJUNA, WHO HAD KRISHNA AS HIS GUIDE AND CHARIOTEER.

"AS THEY SAT DISCUSSING THE STRATEGY OF WAR, KRISHNA'S BROTHER, BALARAMA, ARRIVED THERE.

"HE SAID —

THIS FIERCE AND TERRIBLE SLAUGHTER APPEARS INEVITABLE. I LOOK FORWARD TO SEEING YOU ALL EMERGE SAFE AND SOUND FROM THIS STRIFE.

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AS BHEEMA AND DURYODHANA ARE BOTH MY DISCIPLES AND EQUALLY DEAR TO ME, I SHALL NOT TAKE SIDES IN THIS BATTLE.

I CANNOT BEAR TO SEE THE DESTRUCTION OF ALL THE KAURAVAS. I SHALL GO ON A PILGRIMAGE FAR AWAY FROM HERE TO THE BANKS OF THE RIVER SARASWATI.

"AND WITH THAT, BALARAMA LEFT.

"THEN YUDHISHTHIRA HAD ANOTHER VISITOR, KING RUKMI, BROTHER-IN-LAW OF KRISHNA. ADDRESSING ARJUNA, HE SAID —

IF YOU ARE NERVOUS, I AM HERE TO HELP YOU. I SHALL SINGLE-HANDEDLY KILL ALL YOUR FOES.

"ARJUNA SAID —

O GREAT KING, DO NOT FORGET I AM A SON OF PANDU AND A DISCIPLE OF DRONA. NOW WITH KRISHNA AS MY ALLY, WHAT HAVE I TO FEAR? YOU MAY STAY WITH US OR GO, AS YOU WISH.

"RUKMI THEN OFFERED HIS ASSISTANCE TO DURYODHANA.

O DURYODHANA, I AM HERE TO HELP YOU IF YOU NEED ME.

O KING, I DO NOT NEED YOUR HELP. I HAVE MANY INVINCIBLE HEROES AMONG MY RANKS.

"AND SO TWO GREAT WARRIORS – BALARAMA AND RUKMI ABSTAINED FROM THE GREAT WAR.

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THEN, O KING, DURYODHANA SENT A MESSAGE TO THE PANDAVA CAMP THROUGH ULOOKA, SON OF SHAKUNI.

"ULOOKA ARRIVED AT THE PANDAVA CAMP AND MET YUDHISHTHIRA.

O KING, I AM HERE MERELY AS A MESSENGER TO CONVEY WHAT DURYODHANA HAS TO SAY TO YOU.

DO NOT FEAR. TELL ME WHAT DURYODHANA SAID.

"DURYODHANA SAID—

ADDRESS YUDHISHTHIRA THUS: O SON OF KUNTI, RECALL THE GAME OF DICE AND HOW DRAUPADI'S MODESTY WAS OUTRAGED IN THE KAURAVA ASSEMBLY. AND ACT LIKE A MAN!

"HE CONTINUED—

SAY TO BHEEMA: O BHEEMA REMEMBER YOUR VOW TO DRINK DUHSHASANA'S BLOOD! THE TIME HAS COME TO FULFIL IT. THE FIELD OF KURUKSHETRA IS READY FOR WAR. COME, LET US CLASH!

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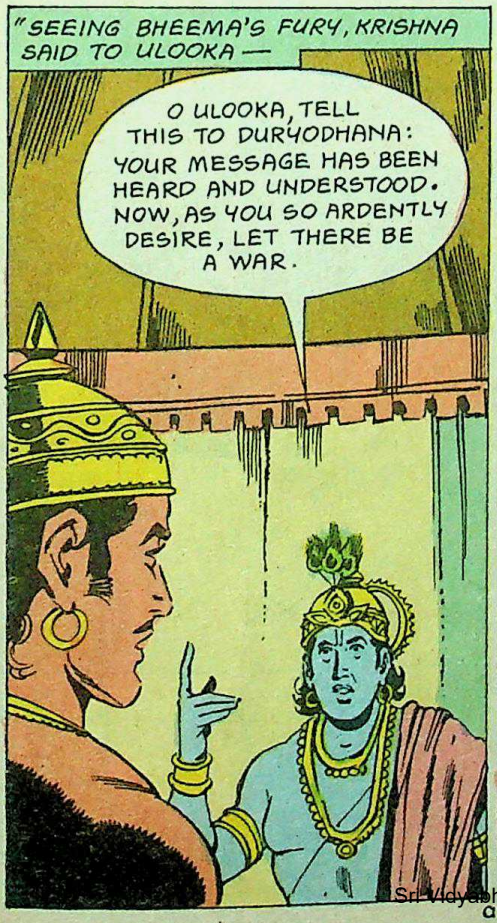

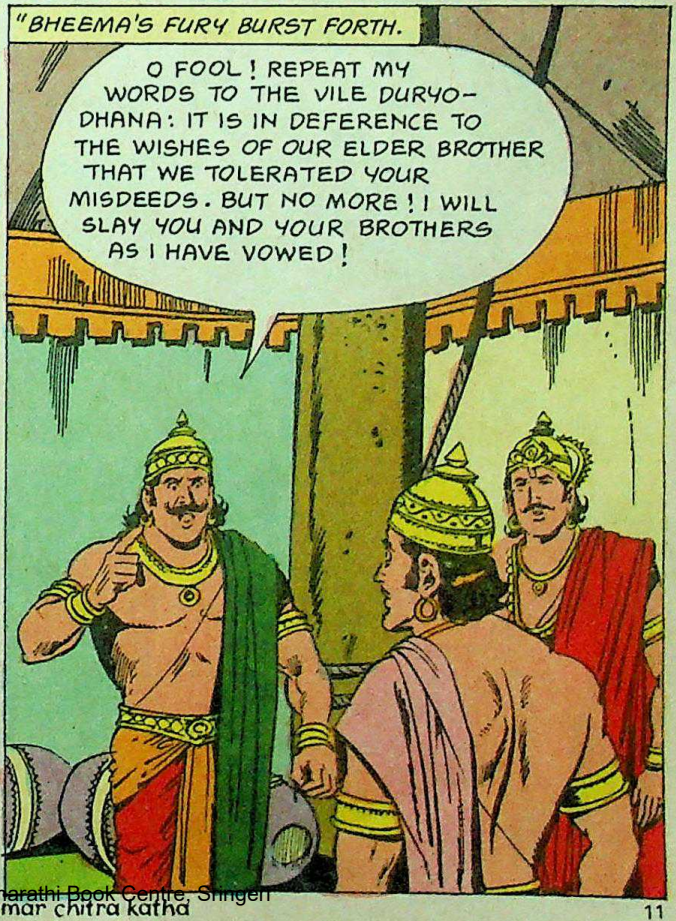

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"THEN DURYODHANA CALLED BHEESHMA AND SAID —

O GRANDSIRE! WITH YOUR LEADERSHIP AND DRONA'S SUPPORT, OUR VICTORY IS ENSURED. WOULD YOU CLASSIFY THE RATHIS, ATIRATHIS AND MAHARATHIS* IN THE TWO ARMIES?

"BHEESHMA SAID —

O DURYODHANA, YOU AND YOUR BROTHERS, SKILLED AND ACCOMPLISHED WARRIORS, ARE RATHIS, FOR CERTAIN.

"THE MIGHTY DRONA, ENDUED WITH GREAT PROWESS, IS A MAHARATHI.

"DRONA'S SON, ASHWATTHAMA, A MASTER AT WARFARE, IS A MAHARATHI.

THIS VILE BRAGGART, KARNA, IS NEITHER A RATHI NOR AN ATIRATHI. IN MY JUDGEMENT HE IS ONLY HALF A RATHI!

* WARRIORS ON CHARIOT WERE CLASSIFIED AS RATHI, ATIRATHI OR MAHARATHI, DEPENDING ON THEIR SKILL AND VALOUR

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*ACK ON BHEESHMA, NO. 34

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"THE NEXT MORNING, AS THE KAURAVA TROOPS ARRAYED FOR BATTLE, DURYODHANA SAID —

O BHEESHMA, PLEASE TELL ME IN HOW MANY DAYS YOU CAN DESTROY THE ENTIRE PANDAVA ARMY.

"BHEESHMA SAID —

SLAYING TEN THOUSAND FOOT SOLDIERS AND ONE THOUSAND CHARIOT WARRIORS DAILY, I SHALL DESTROY THE ENTIRE PANDAVA ARMY IN A MONTH'S TIME.

WHEN ASKED, DRONA SAID, HE WOULD TAKE A MONTH, KRIPA ESTIMATED TWO MONTHS WHEREAS KARNA CLAIMED THAT HE COULD DESTROY THE ARMY IN JUST FIVE DAYS.

"BHEESHMA BURST OUT WITH LAUGHTER AT KARNA'S CLAIM —

JUST WAIT, TILL YOU COME FACE TO FACE WITH ARJUNA! TILL THEN YOU CAN CONTINUE TO FOOL YOURSELF.

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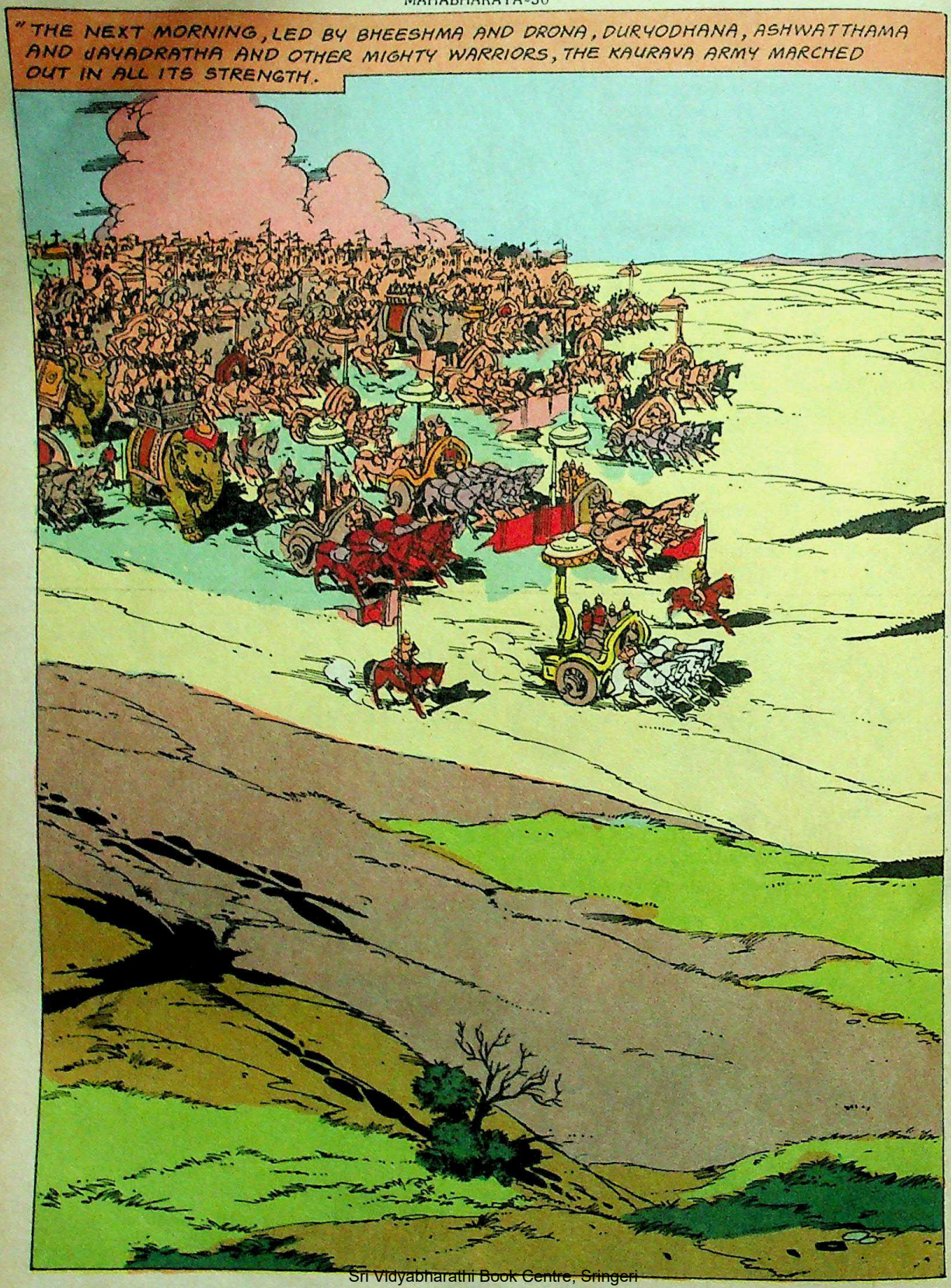

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* THIS CODE OF WARFARE IS REFRESHINGLY DIFFERENT FROM PRESENT-DAY PRACTICES WHICH SPARE NO ONE

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SO BE IT! I SHALL BESTOW DIVINE VISION ON SANJAYA. HE WILL BE ABLE TO SEE EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENS ON THE BATTLE-FIELD AND NARRATE IT TO YOU.

"DHRITARASHTRA SAID—

O SANJAYA, NOW THAT THE VENERABLE SAGE HAS BESTOWED DIVINE VISION ON YOU, TELL ME WHAT IS HAPPENING ON THE BATTLE-FIELD, HOW THE TWO ARMIES HAVE ARRAYED THEMSELVES.

O KING, AS SOON AS THE SUN ROSE, THE AIR REVERBERATED WITH THE BLARE OF CONCHES, THE SOUND OF DRUMS, THE NEIGHING OF HORSES AND THE WAR-CRIES OF THE ARMIES.

"THE KAURAVA ARMY SURGED FORTH, LED BY BHEESHMA. BEHIND HIM WERE THE MIGHTY DRONA, KRIPA AND ASHWATTHAMA.

"SEEING THE MAMMOTH KAURAVA ARMY IN BATTLE ARRAY ADVANCING TOWARDS THEM, YUDHISHTHIRA SAID TO ARJUNA—

O ARJUNA, COMPARED TO THE KAURAVAS, OUR ARMY IS MUCH SMALLER. KEEPING THIS IN MIND WE SHOULD ARRANGE OUR TROOPS IN A SUITABLE FORMATION.

"ARJUNA REPLIED—

O KING, LET US THEN ORGANISE OUR TROOPS TO FORM THE ARRAY CALLED THE VAJRA*. DESIGNED BY INDRA HIMSELF, IT IS AN INVINCIBLE FORMATION.

* THUNDERBOLT, INDRA'S WEAPON

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"AND THUS ARRAYED, THE PANDAVA ARMY BEGAN TO MARCH FORWARD, LED BY DHRISHTADYUMANA, BHEEMA AND ARJUNA.

"AND ON THE BATTLEFIELD OF KURUKSHETRA, RAIN FELL FROM A CLOUDLESS SKY AND THE ROLL OF THUNDER WAS HEARD.

"A MIGHTY WIND BLEW ACROSS THE FIELD THROWING SAND AND PEBBLES IN ALL DIRECTIONS. SO THICK WAS THE DUST CLOUD, THAT DARKNESS DESCENDED AT SUNRISE.

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"WHEN YUDHISHTHIRA SAW THE VAST KAURAVA ARMY, HIS HEART SANK. HE ADDRESSED ARJUNA —

O ARJUNA, BHEESHMA HAS ARRAYED THE VAST KAURAVA ARMY IN AN INVINCIBLE FORMATION. HOW CAN WE HOPE TO FIGHT THEM?

"ARJUNA SAID —

O KING, IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A SMALL ARMY TO DEFEAT A VAST FORCE. FOR VICTORY DOES NOT DEPEND ON MIGHT AND NUMBERS, BUT ON RIGHTEOUSNESS.* WHERE THERE IS KRISHNA, THERE IS VICTORY.

"MEANWHILE, DURYODHANA, ON SEEING THE PANDAVA ARMY ARRAYED FOR WAR, APPROACHED DRONA AND SAID —

SIRE, JUST LOOK AT THE BATTLE FORMATION OF THE PANDAVAS! BHEESHMA WILL BE THEIR IMMEDIATE TARGET. ORDER THE MIGHTIEST OF WARRIORS TO SURROUND AND PROTECT BHEESHMA.

"THEN BHEESHMA BLEW ON HIS CONCH, SIGNALLING THE START OF THE WAR.

"AT THE PALACE DHRITARASHTRA ASKED SANJAYA —

O SANJAYA, WHAT DID MY SONS AND THOSE OF PANDU DO AT THE FIELD OF KURUKSHETRA?

O KING! KRISHNA BLEW ON THE PANCHAJANYA AND ARJUNA ON THE DEVADATTA CONCHES SIGNALLING THEIR READINESS FOR WAR.

*यतोधर्मस्ततो जयः

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"THEN ARJUNA TOLD KRISHNA—

O KRISHNA, STATION MY CHARIOT IN BETWEEN THE TWO ARMIES. LET ME HAVE A GOOD LOOK AT MY OPPONENTS IN THIS BATTLE.

KRISHNA THEN DROVE THE CHARIOT.

"...AND POSITIONED IT IN BETWEEN THE TWO ARMIES.

"WHEN ARJUNA SAW HIS CLOSE RELATIVES, TEACHERS AND FRIENDS IN THE TWO ARMIES A SUDDEN CHANGE CAME OVER HIS MIND. GONE WAS HIS SELF-ASSURANCE.

O KRISHNA, THE SIGHT OF THE SEA OF FAMILIAR FACES ALL SET FOR WAR MAKES ME WEAK-KNEED, MY MOUTH DRY AND MY BODY TREMBLE.

THE GANDEEVA IS ABOUT TO FALL FROM MY HANDS, MY SKIN IS AFLAME, MY MIND WANDERS AND I CAN BARELY STAND ON MY FEET.

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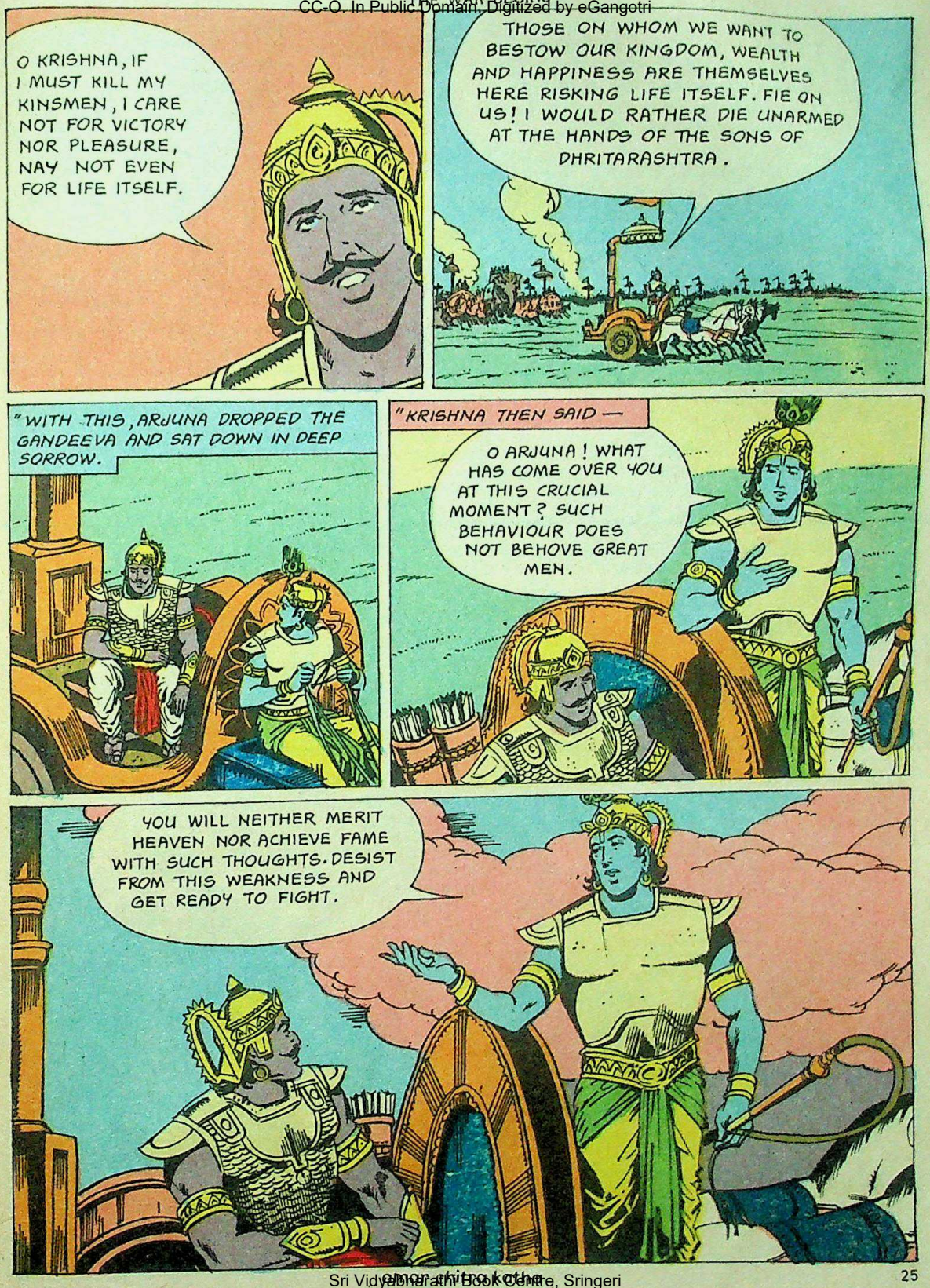

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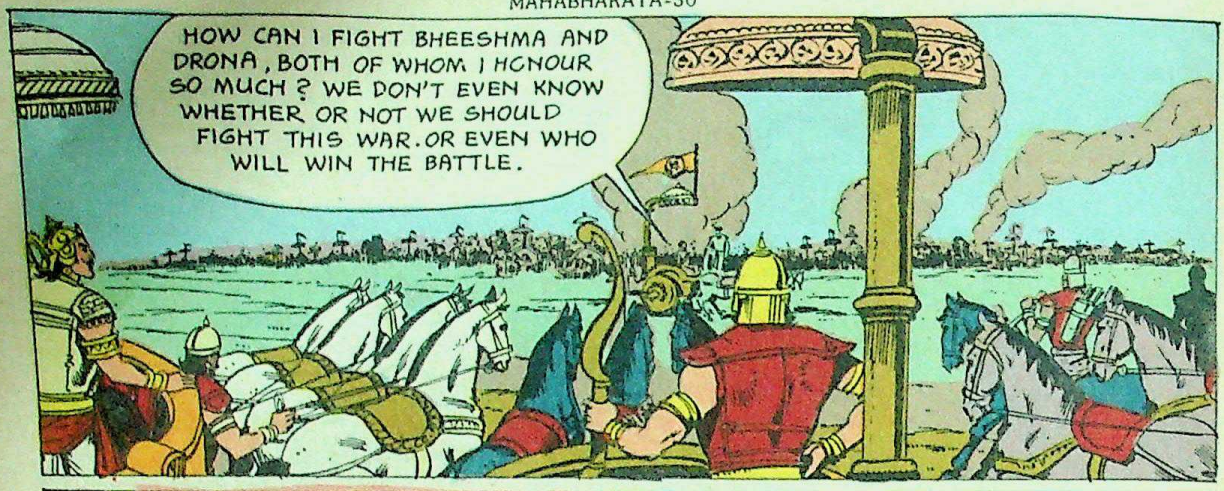

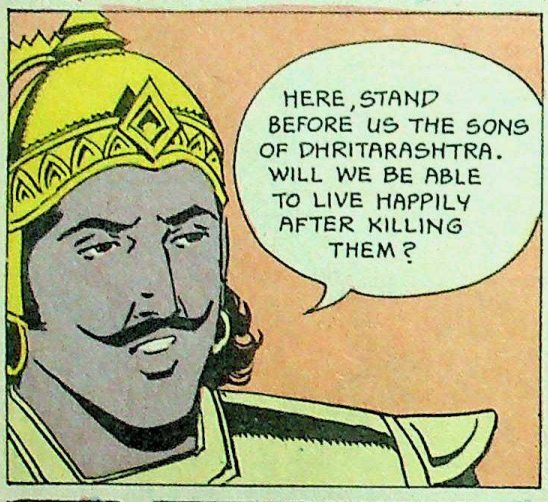

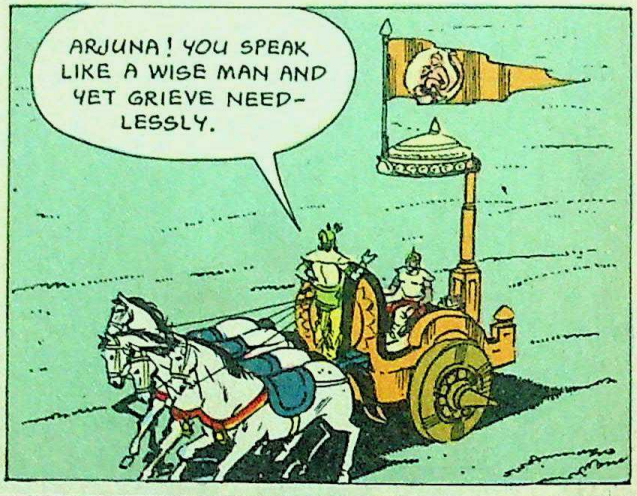

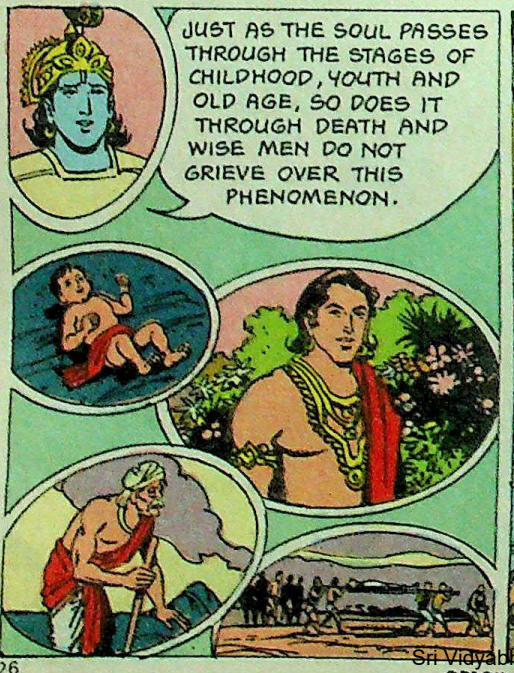

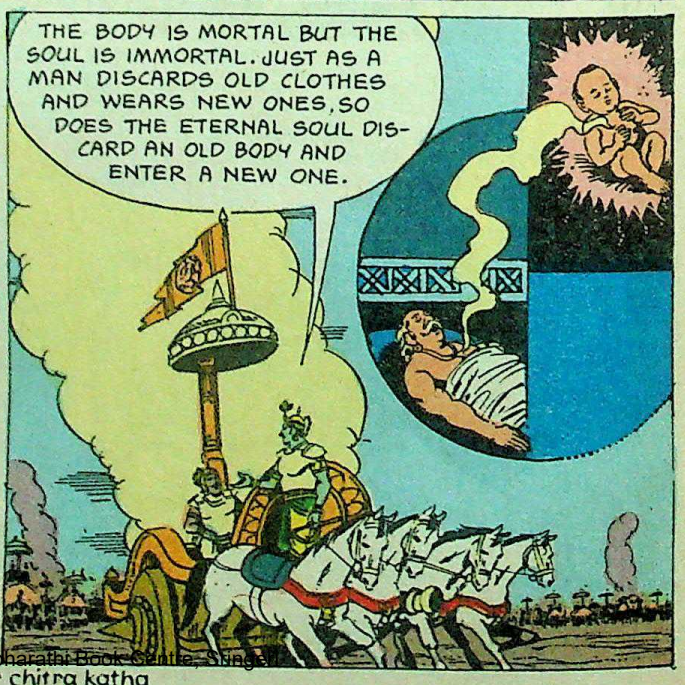

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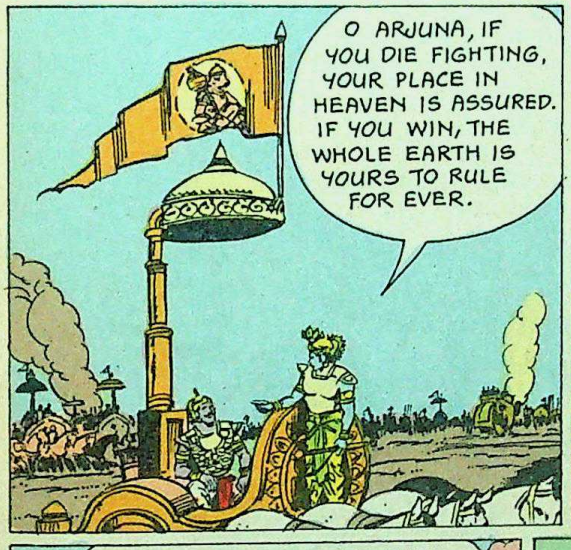

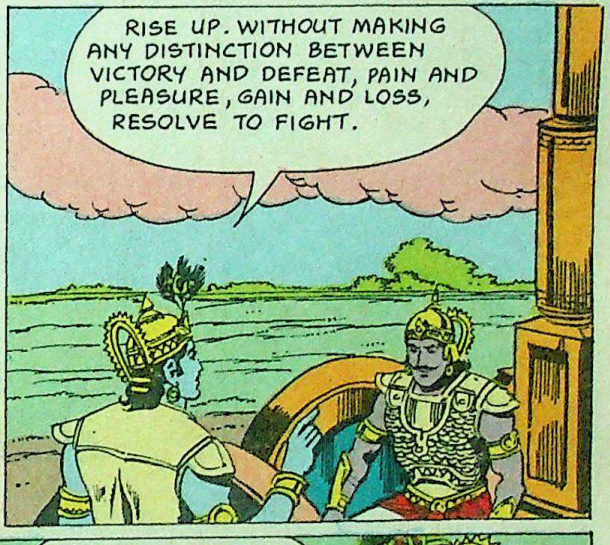

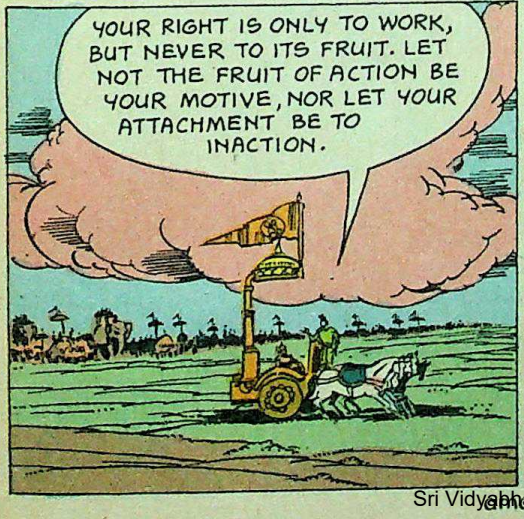

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"ARJUNA THEN ASKED —

O KRISHNA, HOW DOES ONE BECOME EVENMINDED ?*

JUST AS THE TORTOISE WITHDRAWS ITS BODY INTO ITS SHELL, SO DOES ONE OF EVEN MIND WITHDRAW HIS SENSE ORGANS FROM DELUSIONS AND ATTACHMENTS.

"ON HEARING THIS EXPLANATION ARJUNA SAID —

O KRISHNA ! MY DOUBTS HAVE NOW BEEN DESTROYED AND MY MIND HAS BECOME CLEAR. I WILL DO AS YOU BID.

"AS ARJUNA PICKED UP HIS GANDEEVA AND TWANGED IT...

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* SEE THE GITA, AMAR CHITRA KATHA TITLE NO. 127

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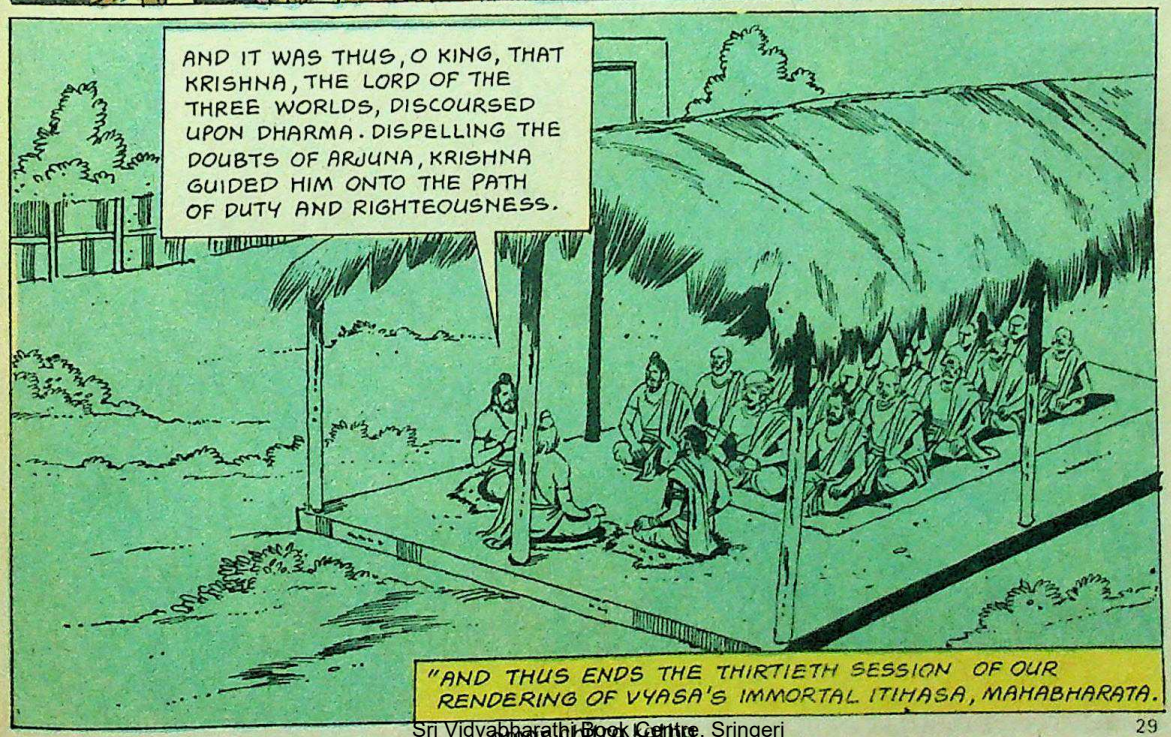

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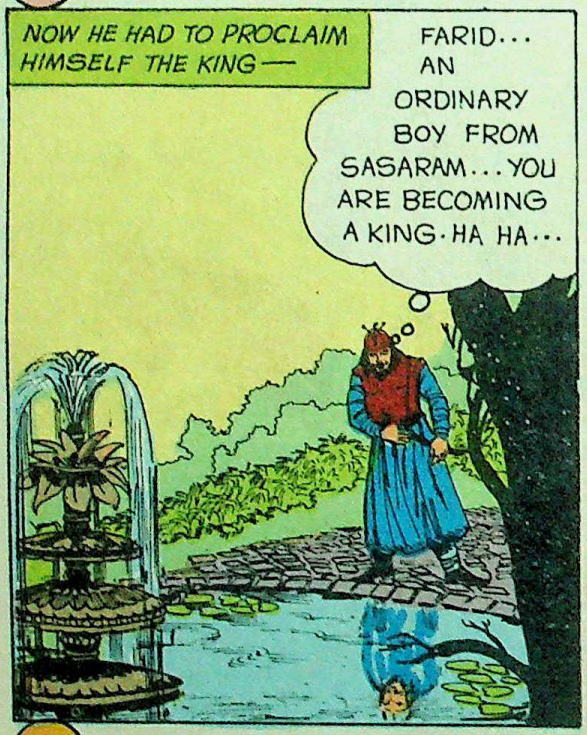
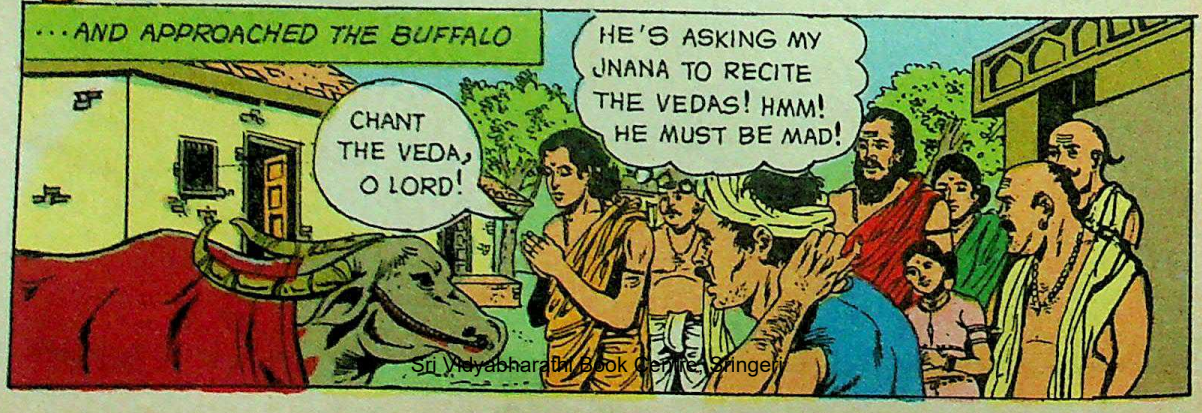
Quiz INDIA–10

Compiled by: Shobha Rao

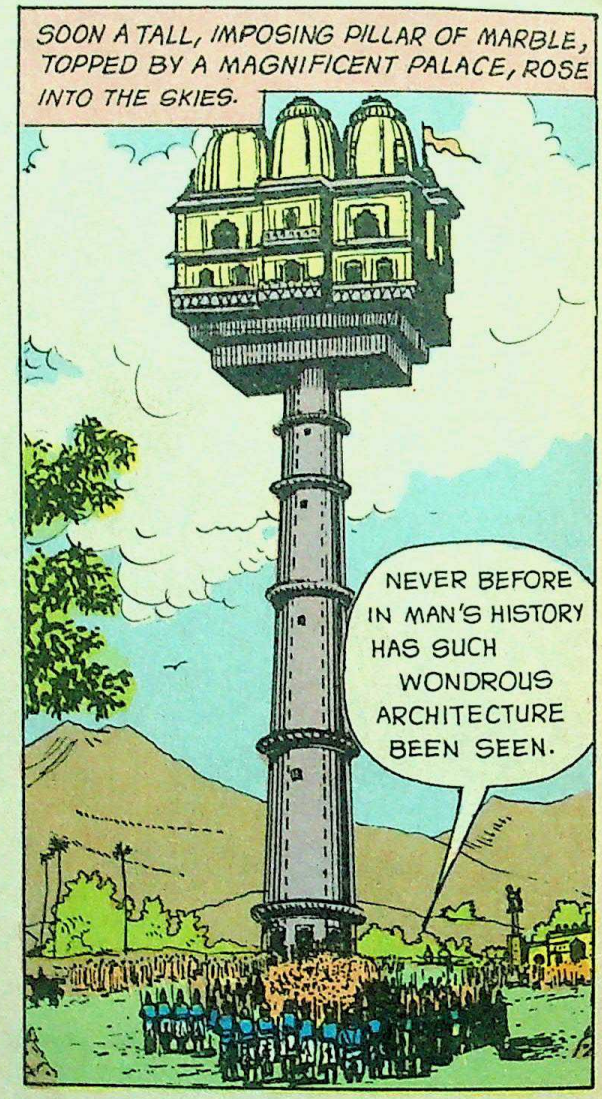
I NAME THIS GREAT KING



II WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?



III WHY WAS THIS STRUCTURE BUILT?



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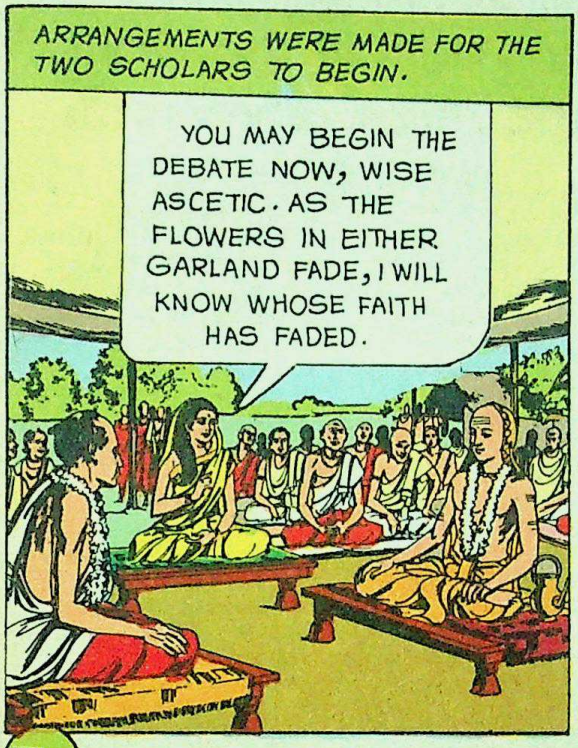
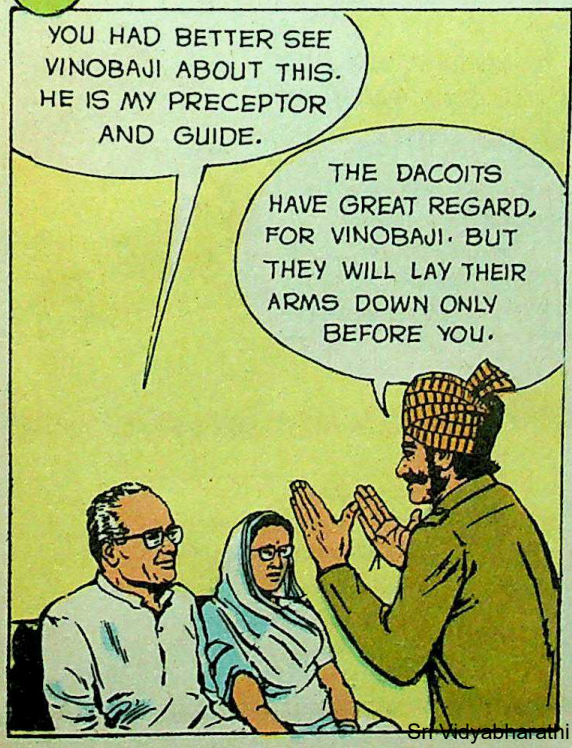
QUIZ INDIA—10
Coupon.

IV a. IDENTIFY THE PERSONS SHOWN:



IV b.



RULES

1. Every entry must be accompanied with the coupon given on this page.
2. The first 50 all-correct entries received in our office will each receive 2 titles of Amar Chitra Katha.
3. Every correct entry will receive a green certificate.
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We are sorry that the answers to Quiz India - 8 published in ACK No. 386 were inadvertently given in the wrong sequence. The correct sequence is as follows:-

I. The Saka King is killed by Prince Chandragupta who had come there in the disguise of Maharani Dhruva Devi.
II. Rabindranath Tagore, Shanti Niketan III. Ganesha
IV. Bhagiratha V. Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ INDIA NO. 9

Answers to Quiz India No. 9 will appear in Amar Chitra Katha issue No. 388 dated 1.9.87.

ANSWERS TO QUIZ INDIA NO. 10

Answers to Quiz India No. 10 will appear in Amar Chitra Katha issue No. 392 dated 1.11.87.

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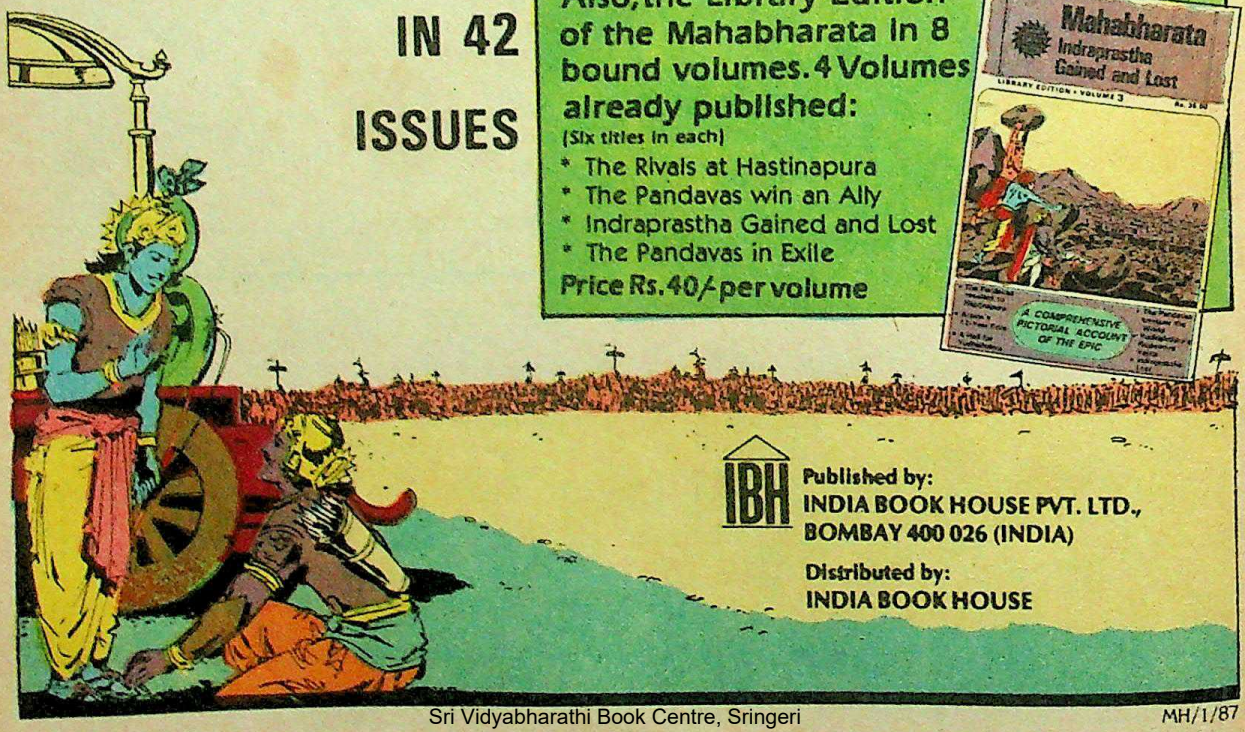

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